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State of CT Legislative Bldg.
Appropriations Committee
300 Capitol Ave
Hartford CT 06001

February 14, 2022

Appropriations Committee: Conservation & Development Subcommittee Public Hearing,
Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Re: MUSIC HAVEN inclusion in the DECD Budget, **H.B. No. 5037**.

Dear Esteemed Senators and House Members:

After many years of advocacy by Music Haven families, students, and supporters for inclusion in the state budget, our organization was added to the list of line items in the DECD budget in 2020. Due to an error, we were not included in the 2nd year of that biennial budget, but we were grateful to see that corrected last year after more than 60 individuals submitted testimony in support of our \$100,000 budget line. Over the past three years, more than 100 people have written and testified in support of our inclusion in the budget, from students and parents, to leaders in the New Haven arts community, our audience members and donors, to national leaders in the community arts education sector.

The funding provided in 2020 and again in 2022 has enabled us not only to continue to provide our exceptional arts education programming free of charge to students from low-income families, but also to expand our enrollment (we now have 94 students, an increase of 24% over last year's enrollment), deepen our existing programs, and continue to bring live performances out into the community. Support has also enabled us to reach out to new audiences and new funders, and we recently hired a new full-time Communications Manager (with competitive salary and benefits). This year, 8 of our students will graduate from high school, having been with us a combined 52 years. Inclusion in the budget enables us to have a predictable source of funding each year so we can focus on supporting them and the rest of our students, on building our donor and funder base, on improving programming, and on bringing music out into the community.

I urge the Committee to support continued funding of Music Haven at the current funding level (\$100,000) in the two years of the next biennial budget, and beyond, because:

1. We are the ONLY organization in the State of Connecticut that provides 100% free one-on-one instruction on strings (and a variety of other programming) to students from low-income families. Our students are more than 90% Black and/or Latinx, and most come from families earning below 250% FPL (program eligibility is based on income), and they would not otherwise have the opportunity to receive one-on-one lessons on an instrument and participate in the kinds of ensembles and classes we offer free of charge. The need is great, as evidenced by our wait list, which is consistently equal to or greater than the size of our enrollment.
2. From an Economic Development standpoint, Music Haven is a smart investment for DECD and for the state's arts sector for two key reasons.
 - a. Despite our relatively small size, we have a demonstrated commitment to providing excellent jobs in the arts sector—90% of our employees are full-time with benefits and access to professional development opportunities, and no employee (except 2 of our high school students who have paid positions at minimum wage) earns less than \$25/hr. We have full-time faculty, not just “teaching artists”, and these musicians live, buy homes, and raise children in our community. As a result, every penny of our \$100,000 allocation is spent directly on programming and will remain in our state—in fact, in our city. We do this because we have a model based on providing the highest quality programming to the kids who need it most. We are committed to excellent arts sector jobs because we want to keep great people—and we want to keep them because our students and families benefit from long-term relationships with our teachers and staff.
 - b. The future of an arts industry in the state requires that the sector figure out how to be more racially and economically inclusive. Our students are not only future musicians and music teachers (and whatever else they might want to be), they and their families are the future ticket-buying audience for the arts. This is inherently a shrinking sector if it is a sector that speaks and responds only or primarily to predominantly white communities of affluence.

I have enclosed our most recent (2020-2021) Impact Report to show you some of the amazing things the state's investment has made possible, and we look forward to continuing our work with your support.

Sincerely,

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